DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 247 EA 023 797

AUTHOR Henry, Thomas B.
TITLE Spotlight of a Century of Educational Reform in England.
PUB DATE Dec 91
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Curriculum Development; Decentralization; *Educational Change; *Educational Finance; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *History; *Public Education; Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Education Reform Act 1988 (England); *England; National Curriculum

ABSTRACT

During the past 100 years, there has been an evolution in publicly funded education in England. This report provides a historical perspective for recent reforms and spotlights three related areas. The first section describes the early 19th-century Newcastle Commission's efforts to design a system of sound and cheap elementary education for everyone. The interest and activity generated in the late 19th century carried over to the 20th century, culminating in the Reform Act of 1944, which provided free secondary education for all students. The act also provided grammar schools for the less able and technical schools for those with manual skills. For many years, the "eleven plus" examination separated children at age 11 into grammar schools for the bright and secondary modern schools for the rest, who tended to leave as soon as they were legally able. The 1988 Education Reform Act mandates a national elementary and secondary school core curriculum of 10 subjects featuring certain attainment targets. Allied to this curriculum are six cross-curricular education themes: education for mutual understanding; cultural heritage; health education; information technology; economic awareness; and career education. The reform act also mandates formal assessment and reporting of progress at ages 7, 11, 14, and 16. The reform act emphasizes local control, open enrollment, and changes in tertiary education. Contemporary literature reflects both mild praise and harsh criticism of Britain's recent educational reforms. (26 references) (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Henry

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED343247

SPOTLIGHT ON A CENTURY OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN ENGLAND

THOMAS B. HENRY

EA 023 797

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Spotlight on a Century of Educational Reform in England

Abstract

During the past one hundred years there has been an evolution in publicly-funded education in England. This report attempts to provide a historical perspective for recent reforms and spotlights three related areas.

(i) The historical genesis and early nineteenth century is outlined. Apathetic attitudes in England changed with the news of Horace Mann's success with the common schools in the U.S.A. Progress in European schools had a similar effect on education in England.

(ii) The interest and activity generated in the late nineteenth century carried over into the twentieth century, culminating in the Reform Act of 1944 as discussed. As a milestone in English education this act greatly expanded and improved public education.

(iii) The 1988 Education Reform Act is described at length and contemporary reaction from a number of British journals is analyzed. Opinion ranges from open hostility, to the cynical yet practical view that regardless of statutes and mandates, it is the teacher in the classroom who has the final say with regard to curriculum.

Spotlight on a Century of Educational Reform in England

During the past one-hundred years there has been an evolution in publicly-funded education in England. This report attempts to give a historical perspective to recent reforms and spotlights three related areas. First of all, the historical genesis and early nineteenth century education is outlined. This is followed by a description and analysis of twentieth century public education, with particular emphasis on the Reform Acts of 1944 and 1988. Thirdly, contemporary literature is reviewed and analyzed.

Historical Genesis

Although there was a significant expansion of public education in Western Europe and the United States during the early part of the nineteenth century, England was hesitant in becoming part of such a movement. At that time public outcry was such that in 1859 the government appointed "The Committee of Seven" under the leadership of the Duke of Newcastle, to design a system of "sound and cheap elementary education for all the people." According to Male (1988):

> The Newcastle Commission as it came to be known reported in 1861 that those who attended school did for brief periods only: of those in school in 1858,

39% had attended for less than a year. (p. 1322). The release of the Taunton Commission Report in 1868 coincided with Horace Mann's visit to England. His revelation of the flourishing Common School Movement in America, dramatized the need for government involvement in education. This discontent eventually resulted in the Education Act of 1870.

1870 - 1936

The last thirty years of the nineteenth century were momentous times with public education expanding at a phenomenal rate. Silver (1983) notes that W.E. Forster, an economist, is largely credited with initiating change. Forster acknowledged that although England had a head start in the industrial revolution, there were grounds to fear that it was falling behind other countries, and that the education of the average worker was somehow responsible.

The Education Act of 1870 called for the setting up of school boards in districts where schools were non-existent or totally inadequate. Money was appropriated for this cause and by the year 1900, the average school attendance in England was doubled. Male (1988) notes that "The Education Act of 1902 consolidated the 2500 school boards into 328 L.E.A.'s (Local Education Authorities) and by 1911 over half of all thirteen-year-olds were in school" (p. 1323).

Despite the steady progress in the formation of elementary schools, secondary schools lagged far behind. For the most part, secondary education for the middle and upper classes was provided by a number of private fee-paying schools. Ironically, the government of the day was proud of its non-involvement in secondary education, which left the majority of England's poorer classes with little, or no, education.

By 1810, Protestant Nonconformists founded the "British and Foreign Society" in order to establish public schools. This idea was emulated in 1817 by the Anglican Church who formed the "National Society." Despite their diligence and fierce competition between them, the task was too great. They failed to meet the educational needs of the masses. As a result, demands were made for government intervention, and in 1833 Parliament voted funds to supplement their private attempts.

Initially these funds came without conditions but in 1856 an Education Department was created to monitor spending. Although recognition of the need for government involvement came slowly, the Education Act of 1936 attempted to address these issues. Its implementation however, was put on hold due to the outbreak of World War II.

The Reform Act of 1944

The Education Act of 1944 is considered by many to be one of the most critical events in the history of English education. For the first time in England, secondary education became free for all students. It sought to provide grammar schools for the academically inclined, secondary schools for the less able and technical schools for those with manual skills. For many years the "eleven plus" examination separated children at age eleven into grammar schools for the bright, and secondary modern schools for the rest. Cairncross (1987) notes, "that most of the students in the secondary modern schools left as soon as they were legally able." He notes that "in 1967 only 22% stayed even one year past the legal leaving age of 15" (p. 18). He goes on to summarize the most salient features of this act as follows:

> It mandated L.E.A.'s to provide adequate educational facilities in keeping with different age levels, range of ability and aptitude. . . . all schools receiving L.E.A. funds must open with a corporate act of worship and that a course on religion must be offered based on a syllabus agreed to, by local churches (p. 18).

With the exception of the course in religion there was no prescribed curriculum. Instead, each school was free to

offer its own curriculum. Secondary school curriculum, however, was influenced by the external examinations, especially the G.C.E. Traditionally, individual schools were responsible for their own curriculum planning. The headmaster of a school had a great deal of input and the final say with regard to the curriculum for that school. However, in theory he, or she, had to obtain approval from the governing body of that school.

The 1988 Education Reform Bill

David Brand (1987) notes that, "British Prime Minister Thatcher's third term election victory on June 11 1987, assured Parliament's passage on July 29 1988 of the most far-reaching Education Reform Bill since the 1944 Education Act" (p. 35).

Curriculum

It sets out the principal curriculum requirements for all students in publicly-funded schools. Part III of the Act emphasizes that these students are entitled to a curriculum which is balanced, broadly-based and which:

> promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of pupils at school and thereby of society; and
>
> prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

This Act mandates a national elementary and secondary school core curriculum of ten subjects: English and Math, 10% of teaching time; Science, 10% - 20%; Technology, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Language, Art, Music and Drama, 10% each; Physical Education, 5%, with the remaining time for non-compulsory electives, such as the Classics. The statutory areas of study and the relevant compulsory school subjects are listed in the table below.

AREA OF STUDY	PRIMARY SCHOOLS	POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS FORMS 1-3	POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS FORMS 4/5
ENGLISH	English	English	English
MATHEMATICS	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	Science Technology & Design	Science Technology & Design	Science Technology & Design
THE ENVIRON-MENT AND SOCIETY	History Geography	History Geography	History OR Geography
CREATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE STUDIES	Art & Design Music Physical Education	Art & Design Music Physical Education	Art & Design OR Music OR Drama Physical Education
LANGUAGE STUDIES		French OR German OR Italian OR Spanish	French OR German OR Italian OR Spanish

Prior to the 1988 Reform Act each school decided what subjects to offer its students. Although many schools did offer a balanced curriculum, some did not. Consequently, many students left school with deficiencies. Some also discovered that because they had dropped important subjects, they couldn't get the type of job or further education they wanted.

The National Curriculum is intended to remedy this occurrence and aims to guarantee students a balanced range of subjects for the twelve years of their compulsory schooling. It is now mandatory that all public funded schools provide the same basic subjects for all their students, and monitor their progress. In addition to the basics, schools are required to offer their students a choice of other subjects.

Each subject has been assigned its own list of Attainment Targets. These are objectives and enumerate what students should know, understand, and be able to do in each subject at various stages of schooling. For example, as part of English, most 16-year-olds should be able to write speaking notes for a presentation to the class, about a current news item.

Allied to the curriculum are six education themes which are to be included in the curriculum of all students. These themes are not additional subjects but are to be woven into

the compulsory subjects. Consequently they are referred to as "cross-curricular" themes. they are:

1. Education for Mutual Understanding
2. Cultural Heritage
3. Health Education
4. Information Technology
5. Economic Awareness
5. Career Education

The first four themes must be included in the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools, while the remaining two are to be included only in the secondary curriculum.

ASSESSMENT

Teachers in England have always monitored student progress throughout the year. However, the Reform Act now mandates formal assessment and reporting of progress at the end of each Key Stage, that is at ages; 7, 11, 14 and 16. This will show what students actually know, understand, and are able to do at each stage. The starting point for the assessment system is the individual subject's Attainment Targets. Assessment does not only have to mean a set of end-of-year tests. It may involve class-work, projects and listening and speaking skills. Each school will do its own assessment, but to ensure uniformity, the School Examination and Assessment Council will monitor how each school has carried out its assessment at each stage.

At the end of Key Stage 2 the eleven-plus examination is already in place. The G.C.S.E. has been revised to take account of the statutory requirement and is in place at Key Stage 4, for 16-year-olds. The new examinations have been designed for 7 and 14-year-olds. The new assessments have a number of features. For example, they are intended to be formative and therefore, useful, in deciding how a student's learning should be advanced. The assessment results should provide students with feedback about their achievement, and provide teachers with diagnostic information regarding student performance. The assessment is viewed as summative in that it will reveal the achievements of a student showing what he, or she, knows, understands, and can do.

There is also an evaluative aspect which facilitates the comparison of information about students' achievement in the nation. This is intended to be used as an indicator of where there needs to be further attention, resources or changes in the curriculum.

Communication between schools, parents, Governing Bodies, and the public could be improved. The National Assessment results are aimed at being informative and an attempt to remedy the traditional deficiency. The assessment results are expected to provide a valuable basis for teachers to evaluate their teaching and develop fresh ideas and approaches.

LOCAL CONTROL VERSUS CENTRAL CONTROL

Traditionally the English public schools have been funded and controlled through 96 Local Education Authorities (L.E.A.'s). These L.E.A.'s are either county or city governments with the authority to collect local taxes to meet the needs of local education. The existence of rich and poor schools is inevitable in such a system. The Reform Act has set out to eliminate this disparity and created the opportunity for secondary, and large elementary schools, by vote of parents and principals, to opt-out of local control and to be funded by, and answerable directly to, the National Department of Education and Science.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open enrollment, also known as the "voucher system" or "choice" in the United States, is another feature of the Reform Act. This will permit schools to accept students from outside the neighborhood as space and faculty permit, resulting in better schools admitting more students. This would earn these schools more funding and force the poorer schools to either improve, or close.

REFORMS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

The Reform Act calls for tighter financial control of Britain's 47 Universities and no tenure for new faculty

appointed after November 1987. Twenty-nine Polytechnical colleges and 346 other colleges have been transferred from local to national control and finance. To meet the industrial and international trade needs, new city Technology Colleges (secondary school level, ages 11 - 18) will be built in a number of inner cities.

Contemporary Literature

Contemporary literature on educational reform in the United Kingdom consists of a mixture of harsh criticism and mild praise. David Halpen (1990), in his article in The Journal of Curriculum Studies emphasizes the radical nature of the Reform Act and focuses on two of its most radical characteristics:

1. The Reform Act imposes a centrally directed national curriculum and assessment program on all publicly-funded primary and secondary schools.
2. In addition, it erodes the role of local authorities by turning state schools into more autonomous financial units with more powerful governing bodies. (p. 295).

Halpen views the Reform Act as a regressive step in education and he has been instrumental in setting up a Reform Research Network, which currently co-ordinates all British research relating to the Act. He also refers to the Education Reform Act Project (E.R.A.P.) based at Kings

College, London. This project is directed by Dr. Stephen Ball and is monitoring the impact of the National Curriculum and Assessment policy in secondary schools.

In his article "Empathy: concept confusion and consequences in a national curriculum" in the Oxford Review of Education, Peter Knight (1989) questions the use of the word "empathy", especially since it has at least seventeen meanings. He argues that its frequent use in the curriculum is confusing and ambiguous. He points out:

> that instead of basing the curriculum upon logically-derived assumptions about how children should be reasoning, it should be based upon psychologically grounded evidence about how they do reason. (p. 41).

Martin Lawn (1988) in his article "From responsibility to competency" criticizes the Reform Act and describes it as "an assault on teacher professional autonomy." He appears to have a conviction that the National Curriculum has ushered in a degree of momentum resulting in the task of the teacher being redefined. The traditional role of the pedagogue who was responsible for leading and challenging children, is being reduced to that of a quality control worker who measures competencies. He contends:

> Teaching is to be reduced to skills, attending planning meeting, supervising other, preparing

> courses and review of curriculum. It is to be managed . . . . The National Curriculum is a necessity in a system which has as its intention the aim of depoliticizing (removing the civic nature) of teaching and the aim of managing the teacher. (p. 389).

In their article, "The sleep of reason breeds monsters: the birth of a statutory curriculum in England and Wales," Hartnett and Naish (1990) contend that the term "national curriculum" is a misnommer, since it only applies to publicly-funded state schools in England and Wales. All parochial and private schools in the United Kingdom are free to design their own curriculum, while publicly-funded schools in Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own Reform Acts. These authors see the National Curriculum as a sinister means of re-establishing the nineteenth century two-class system. The private schools will cater for the upper classes who can afford to pay. The masses will be subject to the statutory curriculum. They liken the private schools to "haute cuisine" and the public schools (with a National Curriculum) to the franchised fast food industry.

On the other hand, Professor David Hargreaves of Cambridge University's education department is a protagonist of the National Curriculum. He was a former Chief Inspector with the Inner London Education Authority and has completed

an investigation of how English schools are coming to grips with the government's education reforms. Hargreaves (1990) has produced guidelines for management changes based on good practice, in a sample of schools. He recommended that schools need to take an extended time-out to engage in careful planning. He stated:

> Schools are now businesses and like any business you have to plan. and you have to finance it. Education in the U.K. is under-involved and under-resourced. We have to show that we are making more use of resources than we have done in order to get a greater input of resources in the future. (p. 5).

Undoubtedly one of the most common complaints against the new curriculum is that it is; designed by politicians, executed by professionals and evaluated by politicians. Maurice Holt (1990), in his article in The Journal of Curriculum Studies, describes any attempt to prescribe a central curriculum as an exercise in futility. He declares;

> A school may go through the required motions, but there will be no inner commitment to reform, for teachers will have been denied the opportunity to make it on their own. Much the same can be said of implementation strategies, since the involvement of school staff is rarely more than skin deep. The agenda comes not from inside the school but from the outside. (p. 48).

In their article in The Westminster Studies in Education, Menter and Pollard (1982) examine the implications of the National Curriculum. Their approach is somewhat cynical, as they view the new curriculum as a Trojan Horse. They exhort teachers to use their ingenuity and muster their professional skill to interpret, redesign and implement it as they see fit. Teachers are resourceful, and since the new curriculum is statutory, it is here to stay until the politicians decide otherwise. They pressed their point in the following extract:

> As with the National Curriculum the government can set up frameworks and set general education goals, but it cannot determine the interactive learning processes which people create together. (p. 41).

SUMMARY

This report focused on three aspects of education reform in England. First of all the historical genesis and early nineteenth century education was outlined. This was followed by a description and analysis of twentieth century pubic education, with particular emphasis on the Reform Acts of 1944 and 1988. Thirdly, contemporary literature was reviewed and analyzed.

References

Ahmann, J.S. & Glock M.D. (1981) Evaluating Student Progress: Principles of Tests and Measurement (6th ed) Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc.

Beauchamp, George A., & Kathryn E., (1982) Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Systems. Wilmette Illinois: Kagg Press.

Brand, David, et al., Britain: All Revved Up. Thatcher Rides Again; Winning a Chance to finish her "Revolution." Time CXXXIX No 25 (June 22, 1987) pp. 33, 35 - 38.

Cairncross, Francis Next in the Thatcher revolution: Reforms in the school system. Financier XI No. 10 (October 1987) pp. 18 - 23.

Dent, H.C. (1977) Education in England and Wales London: Methuen.

Department of Education and Science Education Reforms: The Government's Proposal for Schools. London HMSO 1987.

Duke, Benjamin (1986) The Japanese School: Lessons for Industrial America. New York: Prager Inc.

Gross, Beatrice & Ronald Eds., (1985) The Great School Debate. New York: Touchstone Books.

Halpen, David The Education Reform Act Research Network: an exercise in collaboration and communication. Journal of Curriculum Studies 1990 Vol. 22 No. 3, 2925 - 297.

Hargreaves, David Schools must learn to change. Belfast

Telegraph Nov. 18 1990.

Hargreaves, David H. (1982) A Challenge for Comprehensive School. London: Faber & Faber.

Hartnett, Anthony and Michael Naish The sleep of reason breeds monsters; the birth of a statutory curriculum in England and Wales. Journal of Curriculum Studies 1990 Vol. 11 No. 1, 1 - 16.

Holt, Maurice Managing curriculum change in a Comprehensive School: Conflict, compromise and deliberation. Journal of Curriculum Studies 1990000 Vol. 22, No 2, 137 - 148.

Knight, Peter Empathy: concept confusion and consequences in a national curriculum. Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 15, No. 1 1989.

LaPointe, Archie Director of National Association of Education Progress - an agency created by Congress. 1984

Lawn, Martin From responsbility to competency: a new context for curriculum studies in England and Wales. Educational Research Journal, Vol. 1, No. 8, 1988.

Male, George A. Education - United Kingdom World Education Encyclopedia. Oxford and New York. (1988 ed) Vol. III.

Menter, Ian and Andrew Pollard The implications of the national curriculum. Westminster studies in Education Vol. 12 1982 p. 31/42.

National Commission for Excellence in Education. A Nation at Risk. Washington, D.C. U.S. Dept. of Education, 1983.

Oppenheim, Abraham N. (1986) Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Parasuraman, A. (1986) Marketing Research Reading U.K.: Addison Wesley Co., Inc.

Parker, Franklin Behind School Reform, USA - England: Economics and Equity. Flagstaff Az., 1988.

Perot, H. Ross Interview PBS Dec 13 1990.

Rickover, H.G. (1963) American Education; A National Failure. New York: E.P. Dutton Inc.

S.E.A.C. (1990) School Education Assessment Committee General Certificate of Education, General Criteria, London: H.M.S.O. (Her Majesty's Stationery Office)

Silver, Harold Education as History. London: Methuen & Co., 1983.

Tyler, Ralph (1987) Education Reform Phi Delta Kappan p. 278